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ABSTRACT

This paper discusses the importance of reading aloud to students. It emphasizes the teacher's need to plan carefully when to read and what books to read. The paper suggests the following ideas should guide a teacher's choice of reading material: whether the story will capture students' attention; whether the story will increase students' vocabulary; and whether the choices are diverse. The paper emphasizes that the teacher must avoid reading too quickly while reading aloud to students. The connection between reading aloud and sustained silent reading (SSR), as well as individualized reading, is outlined in the paper. In addition, it discusses that teachers may read aloud important information from bulletin boards. The paper closes by discussing teacher and parent training for reading aloud. (PM)

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Reading Aloud to Aid Pupil Achievement.

by Marlow Ediger

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READING ALOUD TO AID PUPIL ACHIEVEMENT

There are numerous times for the teacher to read aloud to pupils to assist them to achieve more optimally. The teacher needs to plan carefully when pupils gain from the read alouds. He/she must also give much thought to what to read orally to pupils. The manner or method of reading aloud indicate further necessary planning on the teacher's part. What might be selected relevant answers to these problems?

Reading Library Books Aloud to Pupils

There are a plethora of times for the teacher to read orally to pupils. Generally after lunch, teachers read aloud during story time which may be fifteen to twenty minutes in duration. The library books used here may pertain to all curriculum areas such as literature, social studies, science, and mathematics. But there are also excellent library books dealing with art, music, and physical education. The teacher may even choose a library book which correlates with what is being taught in science, for example. The book chosen for the read aloud needs to capture pupil attention. Little is gained if pupils become inattentive. For young children, the teacher should face the pupils being read to and read aloud peripherally, whereby he/she can observe the children as well as the print discourse. It is good, too, for these learners to see the illustrations clearly contained in the book in the ongoing read aloud. For intermediate grade pupils, the teacher should also observe pupils carefully during the read aloud to notice if interest is developed and maintained in the oral reading activity. There will be fewer illustrations in library books read to intermediate grade pupils. However, when feasible, they do need to be shared with pupils in the ongoing reading experience.

When library books are chosen for oral reading, the following criteria need to be adhered to:

1. the sequential library books read aloud need to capture and uphold pupil attention and interest.
2. the books read are on the understanding level of involved pupils.
3. the books help pupils to increase their listening vocabularies.
4. the books are meaningful to pupils and use can be made of their ideas and contents.
5. the books do provide for pupils of diverse reading and listening levels of achievement.

6. the books provide followup experiences to clarify ideas and build background information.

7. the books provide opportunities for higher levels of cognition such as critical and creative thinking as well as problem solving.

8. the books chosen for the read aloud may be a guidance source for pupils such as in bibliotherapy.

9. the books and their contents emphasize perceived purpose for pupils being read to.

10. the books selected foster a life long desire for reading on the part of pupils (Ediger and Rao, 2001, Chapter Eight).

Reading aloud to pupils should make for attentiveness on the part of listeners. A monotonous sounding voice destroys reading interest. The teacher then needs to use proper voice inflection including appropriate stress, pitch, and juncture in the read aloud. Clarity in oral reading to pupils is a must. The rate of reading speed needs to give pupils time to comprehend ideas read. Sometimes, teachers read aloud too rapidly and listeners can not take in vital ideas as is necessary for quality comprehension. The rate of reading speed might also be too slow whereby pupils lose interest in the subject matter. Teacher enthusiasm needs to be manifested in the read aloud. Ideas gleaned by pupils should provide opportunities for application, retention and use of acquired subject matter (See Ediger, 2002, 20- 21).

Beck and Mc Keown (2002) indicate the following which assists read alouds to be successful:

* awareness of the distinction between constructing meaning of ideas in a text and simply retrieving information from the text;

* understanding the difficulty of the task young children face in gaining meaning from decontextualized language;

* designing questions that encourage children to talk about and connect ideas and developing followup questions that scaffold, building meaning from those ideas.

* helping students to meaningfully incorporate their background knowledge and reduce the kind of surface association of knowledge that brings forth a hodgepodge of personal anecdotes;

* awareness of how pictures can draw attention away from processing the linguistic content in a text, and thus attention to the timing of the use of pictures; and

* taking advantage of the sophisticated words found in trade books by using them as a source of explicit vocabulary

activities.

Although reading a story to children is not a difficult task for a literate adult, taking advantage of the read aloud experience to develop children's literacy is a complex task. Even with awareness of what makes reading aloud most effective, it is difficult to keep discussions consistently focused on the most productive features. Especially for young children, there is much to manage in conducting a good read-aloud discussion. Key to the task is keeping important text ideas in focus while monitoring children's often limited responses and scaffolding their ideas toward constructing meaning.

Reading Aloud to introduce SSR and Individualized Reading

SSR (sustained silent reading) emphasizes that all pupils in a school, or even in the whole school building, choose a library book to read and have it ready for reading at a given designated time. The purpose of all reading at the same time, teachers included in a classroom, is to serve as a model for pupils.

Prior to pupils making selections for reading, the teacher needs to briefly introduce selected books to readers. The teacher may read aloud to pupils a paragraph from a few of these chosen library books. Good methods and procedures need to be used in these introductions. Readers are then to become motivated to choose and read library books.

Individualized reading goes one step beyond that of SSR in that pupils individually or in groups have conferences with the teacher after the completion of reading a library book. Group conferences may be held with the teacher if these pupils, for example, have read the same paperback. The teacher may then evaluate comprehension and oral reading skills of the learner involved in the conference. Thus, in the individualized reading program, the teacher may also introduce selected library books and read short selections therefrom aloud to whet pupil attitudes for reading. With individualized reading, the pupil

1. owns the reading curriculum by choosing his/her very own library books to read.
2. may select books personally to read which are interesting and on his/her reading level.
3. may pace reading speed according to what can be readily comprehended.
4. appraises the self in terms of reading achievement in SSR, and in individualized reading with teacher assistance.
5. sequences his/her own reading achievement with personal selections of library books made.

The teacher in individualized reading monitors and assists pupils in word recognition and comprehension tasks. Here, the teacher's job is even more important that in large group instruction since each pupil needs to be on task and improving in reading skills.

Reading Aloud With Basal Textbooks Used

The teacher has important read aloud tasks, among a plethora of instructional decisions, in the basal text curriculum. Thus, the teacher may

1. read aloud a salient selection within a topic or theme which is deemed important for all to understand. The selection may have difficult words or ideas which, otherwise, may be difficult to read.
2. read aloud a few sentences which contain new words for pupils to recognize and understand. These sentences come from the basal and may be written on the chalkboard, as the new unit or story is being introduced. Pupils are then aided in seeing the new words in print before reading silently.
3. read aloud paragraphs from the summary or conclusion, from the basal, to help pupils review that which had been learned previously. Comparisons may be made of pupils' versus the writer's summary/conclusions.
4. read the topical headings and subheads of an expository writing to be read by pupils. Learners should follow along in their own books as the teacher reads these aloud.
5. read aloud enumerated items in the text contained in the book as pupils follow along with the teacher doing the oral reading (See Ediger and Rao, 2001, Chapter Six).

If the textbook selection being read allows itself to being presented collectively in reader's theater, then the teacher should read aloud together with pupils each speaking part prior to giving the presentation to an audience. The narrator's part should also be read aloud cooperatively, initially, to practice excellence in pupil's presentation. Reader's theater can be an excellent way for pupils to read orally their respective role part with proper stress, pitch, juncture, and enthusiasm (See also, Ediger, 68 (10-11).

The Class/School Bulletin Board

There are important bulletin board items which need to e read aloud to pupils. These might be selected writings

underneath an illustration which are complex to read. They may be read aloud by the teacher to pupils. The teacher here needs to observe pupils carefully if it appears that good listening is taking place. Periodically, sequential pupils may be asked to repeat and review what has been read aloud. The read aloud content is vital for pupils to understand so that meaning is attached to an ongoing unit of study.

Inservice Oral Reading for Parents and Paraprofessionals

Abilities and skills to do well in read alouds need to be learned and practiced. The author has known school systems which have offered successfully inservice programs for parents and paraprofessionals to do well in reading aloud effectively to children. Modeling and practicing was used to assist parents and paraprofessionals to read well orally to pupils. In the inservice education approach, the following procedures were discussed and then practiced by participants:

1. how to choose good literature for the read aloud. The reading materials need to be appealing to youngsters.
2. how to introduce the library book or reading selection to pupils.
3. how to obtain learner attention to what is being read.
4. how to use the illustrations for the good of the successful read aloud experience.
5. how to read aloud at a rate whereby a pupil will attach meaning to subject matter read (See Ediger, 1993, 4- 6).

Much needs too be done in getting parents more involved in helping their offspring to achieve well. The school seemingly has increased responsibilities which, no doubt, the home should take care of. Koehler and Banner (2002), as written in the February, 2000 issue of the Principal, published by the National Association of Elementary School Principals, stated the following:

In November 2001, we held a series of four Parent Reading Connection sessions held at Kirksville Primary from 6 to 7:30 PM Thursday evenings. Each evening event included a light supper for the family, child care, parent training sessions, and student monitoring.

In the parent training sessions, parents learned the best reading strategies to use with their children and practical training sessions, and student monitoring.

In the parent training sessions, parents learned the best reading strategies to use with their children, received materials

to use at home, worked with other parents, and practiced using some of the strategies. In addition, students came for 12 one hour sessions after school, three times a week during November. Transportation home was provided through grant money. Six teachers, a high school student and an administrator worked with the students. The grant was funded by a Goals 2000 grant.

To determine which students qualified for the special services, each classroom teacher and the reading teachers conducted leveled reading assessments. Using previous data as a baseline, the scores were evaluated by the team of teachers, Title 1 specialists and an administrator to determine participants. Students who were reading more than one grade level below expected grade level were invited to participate. The administrator, Title 1 specialists, and classroom teachers met with parents individually to share information about the program.

We were pleased with the results of the program in its second year, Of the children invited to participate, 17 of 27 attended both the training sessions for one hour after school

When retesting is done in January, it will determine whether each child still needs more assistance....

Reading aloud to children is a very valuable way of assisting pupils to enjoy reading and in learning to read (See Gupta, 2001).

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